



UPDATE

Newsletter of the N.Y. African Burial Ground Project

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Spring/Summer 2003

• www.africanburialground.com •

Volume 3, Issue 9

“**RITES OF ANCESTRAL RETURN**”

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.



Renewal: Tomie Arai

Photo credit: M. Scott Johnson

DEAR UPDATE READERS:

Plans for the reburial of the ancestral remains from the N.Y. African Burial Ground are currently underway for a reinterment ceremony which will conclude at the landmark African Burial Ground site on Saturday, October 4, 2003.

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture will organize, produce and manage a series of events commemorating the reinterment of the ancestral remains removed from the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan in 1991-92.

“The African Burial Ground unearthed in May 1991 in lower Manhattan is one of the most significant finds in African-American history. We now call upon the community and public to come together with us in this historic mission to afford the ancestors all of the dignity and stature that they and their descendants deserve,” states Howard Dodson, Director of the Schomburg Center, regarding the mission of organizing and managing the reburial activities.

The “*Rites of Ancestral Return*” will include a series of events beginning at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where the remains were studied at the W. Montague Cobb Laboratory.

The highlights of these events at this writing include:

1. SEPTEMBER 30, 2003

A two-hour Tuesday evening departure ceremony to be held at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

2. OCTOBER 1 & 2, 2003

Commemorative events in Baltimore, Md., Wilmington, Del., Philadelphia, Pa., and Newark, N.J., will take place as the remains pass through these cities.

3. OCTOBER 3, 2003

An outdoor “Arrival Ceremony” will be held on Friday morning at the foot of Wall Street (site of N.Y.’s colonial slave market) prior to transporting the remains to the burial ground site. A representative sampling of the ancestral remains will be transported from Jersey City, N.J., via flotilla to the foot of Wall Street and the East River. The representative sampling will include: 1 Adult Male, 1 Adult Female, 1 Male Child, and 1 Female Child. The ceremony will last approximately 2 hours.

4. OCTOBER 3-4, 2003

Commemorative Vigil. For a period of not less than 20 hours immediately following the Arrival Ceremony, the ancestral remains will be “on view” at the African Burial Ground Memorial Site. The public will also have an opportunity to view the commemorative artwork in the lobby of 290 Broadway.

Continued on page 16

“It may be that the ancestors bones are coming up at this time to indicate to us that they are disturbed by what we are doing to each other.... But at the same time and paradoxically, it may be that they are coming up at this time because it is a time of hope. There is a resurrection.”

Reverend Herbert D. Daughtry (1993 Documentary film “*Feel it in my Bones*”)

African Burial Ground Memorialization

Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground Project, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground Project (OPEI). Inquiries about the Project may be sent to: 201 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014. Our telephone number is (212) 337-2001.

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and more!

Meaningful and physical reminders are what we use to keep ourselves close to important events, people or places. The African Burial Ground is a permanent voice that summons vigilance in keeping significant the lives, culture, achievements, and contributions of African ancestry in America. Today, the African Burial Ground will endure as a living sentinel, steadfast in making forever intolerable the horror of human bondage and the misdeeds of cultural hostility and indifference. The site is to remember as a sacred place that will acknowledge for all time those who are buried there. Their sacrifices are never to be forgotten, their spiritual legacies to be cherished and their lives to be proudly celebrated.

An Exterior Memorial on the African Burial Ground Site will be a cultural reminder of those who sacrificed their lives for generations to come. GSA is working to ensure an appropriate Memorial embodies historical significance along with community input. The memorial is now in the design stage. A panel of interested parties including Archaeologists, Artist and Engineers specializing in Memorials selected five finalists to compete for the design of the Exterior Memorial.

Exhibitions were held for public review and comments. The exhibits were on display at 1 Bowling Green, Harlem State Office Building. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 290 Broadway and 26 Federal Plaza in New York City.

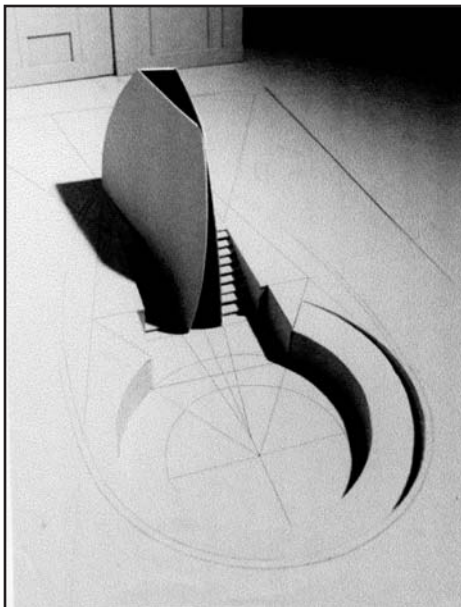
In order to give the public adequate time to view the designs, GSA extended the review time by three weeks. The finalists will now take the public's comments and make adjustments.

GSA plans to sponsor a public forum prior to selecting a final design in order to afford the community and opportunity to meet the finalist and engage in an exchange of ideas, goals, and interest relative to defining an appropriate memorial for the African Burial Ground.

A final determination will be made early 2004. Completion of the Exterior Memorial will be in early 2005.

The concept is to commemorate the **African Burial Ground** with an “**Ancestral Libation Chamber**.” The Ancestral Chamber will serve to physically, spiritually, ritualistically and psychologically define the location where the historic reinterment of remains and artifacts of 408 Africans will take place. It will also serve to acknowledge the site as a “**sacred place**” where thousands of Africans are currently buried.

The Ancestral Chamber will rise out of the ground immediately above the four large reinterment vaults currently proposed for the site. Visitors will circulate down to the level of reinterment, 6’ below ground level by means of a Spiral Processional Ramp or Staircases. The Ramp and Stairs lead to a circular Libation Courtyard centered on axis with the Ancestral Chamber entrance. The chamber will be bathed in light from the east and from the sky above. Upon entering the Chamber, a visitor will be witness to the clearly defined location of the four burial vaults. An inscription shall be placed on the interior walls of the Chamber commemorating the sacred and historical nature of this site.



The process will evolve from the public “secular” space of the city to the spiritual space of the Libation court and culminate in the sacred space of the Ancestral Chamber.

Description of Main Project Components

1. The Ancestral Chamber is intended to reflect African cultural, spiritual and ancestral essence. This spiritual form rises out of the ground like an ancestral pillar and represents the soaring African spirit embracing and comforting all those who enter. The Ancestral Chamber is oriented and open towards the east and to the sky above, allowing natural light to penetrate and illuminate the space defining the location of the Reinterment Vaults. The interior of the Ancestral Chamber provides a sacred space for individual contemplation, reflection, meditation and prayer.

2. The Libation Court is situated on axis with the Ancestral Chamber. It is located 6’ below street level, providing a physical and psychological separation from the public activity of the surrounding urban environment. The Libation Court is a communal gathering place where small- to medium-scale public cultural ceremonies may occur. This spiritual space is where reconsecration of the African Burial Ground site will take place during the reinterment ceremony. The sacred ceremonial ritual of “libation” is the act by which the site will be reconsecrated. The act of presenting libation will serve as an offering and an acknowledgement linking past, present and future generations.

3. The Spiral Processional Ramp descends down 6’ to the level of reinterment, thereby bringing the visitor physically, psychologically and spiritually closer to the ancestors. The ramp and stairs serve as bridges between the living and the spiritual realm.

They symbolize the process of transcendence from physical to spiritual and passage from profane to sacred.

4. The African Burial Ground Plaza will serve to define the sacred boundary between the monument and the surrounding environment. It will incorporate low walls and landscaping along its perimeter. The landscaping will act as a buffer between the city and the monument and may be occupied by large groups of people during public ceremonies.

Seven-stage Construction Sequence

Phase I Concrete Burial Vaults (Soil brought in from Africa should be spread within and around vaults; access will be provided at the top of each vault and left open until reinterment)

Phase II

Ancestral Chamber (Floor and vault covers will be constructed)

Phase III

Processional Ramp and Libation Court

Phase IV

North and South Staircases

Phase V

Ancestral Chamber

Phase VI

African Burial Ground Plaza (and surrounding landscaping)

Phase VII

Reinterment Ceremony (may take place at night in African tradition). Remains shall be carried down the processional Ramp into the Ancestral Chamber and placed within the vaults on an east-west axis with heads toward the west. Access at the top of each vault will then be permanently sealed. Libation ceremony will then take place.



GroundWorks is a group comprised of architects, writers, and an artist formed to address the poignant social, cultural and historical concerns regarding the memorialization of African ancestors buried in the African Burial Ground. Our diverse and complementary interests encompass the fields of architecture, art, and social theory and are supported by our expertise in design, construction, and critical scholarly inquiry. The basis for our proposition – the desire to mark the yet duly unrecognized contributions of peoples of African and African-American heritage, is equally an act of historical remembering and an act that creates a nucleus for current and future cultural celebration. To this end it is our expressed interest to fashion a public setting of extraordinary dignity and elegant restraint that may begin to speak to the memory of those who will now in perpetuity be honored here. We maintain that the African Burial Ground ranks with the very most significant and singular sites in the history of America; the act of memorializing this site must not merely pair extreme intellectual and design rigor, it must strive to create an approach that will be no less than a national paradigm. The act of building upon this ground requires not the extreme or flamboyant gesture but the scrupulously humble and thoughtful response. It was with these thoughts that we conducted our research in order to design an appropriate proposal.

We bring with our proposal a nationally and internationally recognized pool of talent including an artist whose work mines the rich African-American heritage for its forms and meanings, architects whose innovative approaches to design, construction and landscape architecture have produced award-winning works, and scholars whose writings explore the complex social and cultural issues embedded within the erection of memorials and monuments. Our collective rubric GroundWorks bespeaks of the collaborative spirit of cultural exchange and artistic exuberance that is the foundation of our efforts.

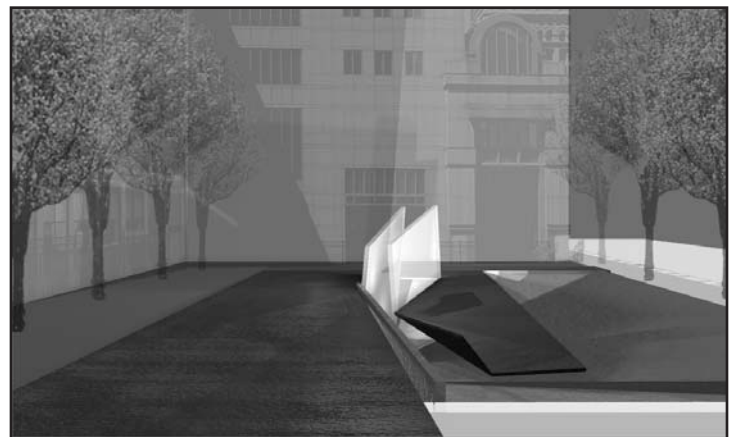
The African founders and builders of New York, forced outside established social and urban limits, have been expelled from history, from sight, and very nearly from memory; they have been made invisible. This project honors our ancestors by making visible the contributions that they made often with their lives. This project serves to both inspire and celebrate the living and yet unborn, that descend in body and spirit, from those that rest in this ground. The proposal proclaims to those who were for a moment in time rendered invisible, that their posterity, with humility but also with resolution, will never again have their contributions to the public go unrecognized nor themselves be reduced to a condition of invisibility.

Day gives the impression that the African Burial Ground is a clearing within a grove. This grove is a sanctuary referencing the forest, which was traditionally the point of refuge for

those fleeing enslavement. To expand the presence of this grove of refuge we propose two additional measures: the African Burial Ground's full five-acre extent be revealed by saturating all sidewalks and free open areas above the original burial area with lush plantings; the streets along the African Burial Ground be appropriately renamed. An illuminated vessel serving as the burial vault shatters darkness; the African Burial Ground is a beacon. The vessel recalls the African practice of illuminating gravesites with lanterns and bonfires. This glowing 'spirit catcher' conjures the historically disenfranchised and formerly invisible ancestors that it holds.

A constructed 'shroud' makes incarnate the too-long unrecognized ancestors by soliciting their invisible presence. This constructed landscape is a hovering quilt of wood, metal and cast sections covering the excavated area of the site. It recalls traditional burial sites whose surfaces are richly ornamented. This shroud incorporates figures of the tools used to build this city and traces of the "tools" of the rituals of the Africans. Visitors flow across this constructed shroud to an inclined plane that descends as it turns around the 'spirit catcher.'

The sacred ground will welcome a community to gather, making obvious the ancestors' visible presence. This north edge of the site exists above ancestral remains that were not disturbed. In contrast to the former landscape of toil, this sacred ground offers rest. This space will enable the burial ground to become a public place, encouraging and inciting participation through ceremonies and old and new rituals. From this sacred ground visitors descend again along the continuation of the inclined plane and enter into the burial crypt. A vessel of light rests upon the level of the original burial ground; it is a vessel for spirits recalling the African 'spirit catcher.' The spiraling pilgrimage from the city concludes in this chamber where the dead will be reinterred. Its walls are pierced by slivers of colored glass resembling the figure of a twig. The effect of dapples light within the spirit catcher calls to mind a clearing within a dense grove; our 'grove' is a space of final refuge for these ancestors. 🌿



AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND MEMORIAL

Joseph DePace, et al.

We are a multicultural, multidisciplinary group of collaborating artists and design professionals. Our design proposal for the **African Burial Ground Memorial** reclaims the site through the creation of a sanctified place in the urban environment. We propose a place of cultural memory, individual contemplation, family healing and community celebration—a living memorial. Its poetic imagery, inspired by the ancestors, signals a distinctly African identity rooted in the true ground of the site. Approaching from the urban context, or from the interior Arcade, the visitor would first recognize the pyramidal **Spirit House** located at the corner of Duane and Elk Streets, the site of undisturbed burials. The distinctive silhouette of the **Spirit House** is a universally acknowledged symbol for a place of burial and legacy of the great Nile Valley civilization. Here, the 18-foot-tall pyramid is diagonally sliced to achieve both external mass and interior volume. Its sloped faces are contiguous with those of the woven copper fence which defines the edges of the site. In all, this element suggests the possibility of a much larger marker, presencing beyond the immediate site to encompass the full extent of sacred ground underlying the district. The woven fence recalls African metalworking, basketry and strip textile design. This six-foot-high perimeter provides a veiled yet secure enclosure emerging from the hearty bed of juniper ground cover planted at its base. In time, the copper construction would develop the exquisite patina of age.

Once inside the gate/awning, participants would find themselves in the **Forecourt**—a point of orientation where the elements of the Memorial are revealed. Centered on the entry, a copper basin signals the presence of the **Place**

of Reinterment and offers water for the pouring of libation. The four pairs of burial vaults are framed with pavers set in a herringbone pattern, again recalling basketry. Within this frame, the burial space is filled with crushed oyster shells. For Africans, the sun-bleached whiteness of shells symbolizes the presence of the ancestors within the honorific whiteness of their realm. In the African-American homegoing tradition, shells and vessels of all description may be broken over the grave to free the spirit within. We reinitiate this traditional practice, inviting the placement of further offerings upon the sacred ground.

The skewed angle of the wall opposite the entry reinstates the known northern boundary of the African Burial Ground. The **Large Court** is dedicated to all of the ancestors. Its level ground surface would be principally paved in crushed oyster shells. Along with their sonic presence underfoot, this permeable surface would allow the filtration of rain water into the soil.

Once inside, the woven copper fence is three feet high in order that the visitor may comfortably look out from the space. One is led along the fence to the **Spirit House**, where one may rest awhile on the corner bluestone bench. The interior of the basket-like shelter would be lined with a collection of cobalt-blue glass bottles. Inspired by the image of the traditional bottle tree, the sparkling vessels would be contributed by members of the Descendent Community in a ritual offering to retain the talents of the ancestors. At times the **Spirit House** may be used to shelter an altar, focus upon the presence of a speaker addressing an assembled group, or in tandem with the **Ring of Remembrance**.

The **Ring of Remembrance** is inspired by our experience of prayer vigils held on the present lawn. Our desire is to establish these gatherings in a more permanent form. The four moments of the sun—birth, life, death and the afterlife—would be anchored by four Star Magnolias nourished in the soil of the site. The lush green foliage of summer would give way to the russet hues of autumn and the bare branched intertwining figures of winter. Their fragrant flowering in springtime would signal the moment of rebirth.

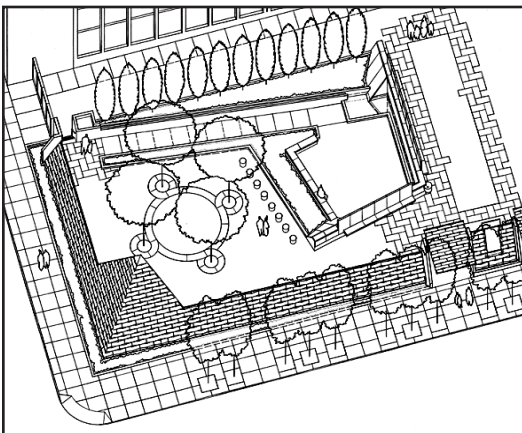
Moving from the **Spirit House**, participants are drawn to a fountainhead, its taut surface of

water mirroring the sky and marking the beginning of the descent into the **Place of Contemplation**. A gently sloping path is cut into the earth, accompanied on either side with berms of black mondo grass, an evergreen perennial recalling the African savannah. Twelve Columnar Yew trees would screen the easement edge year round. A water course flowing from the fountainhead follows the footsteps down and leads the eye to the Well of Souls, the receptacle for the water course. In African culture, the afterlife is considered a mirror of our earthly realm, an inverted world existing beneath the surface of still water.

Emerging from the Well of Souls and accompanied by a parallel water channel would be a mosaic mural titled “**Free at Last**,” conceived as the culminating element of the design, by artist Willie Birch. Framed with a bluestone surround and standing six feet high in two leaves of 36 and 24 feet wide this mosaic “book” would tell a story of the continuum of African culture past, present and future in figure and in text. Returning by the same path, the transformed participant may once again visit the **Place of Reinterment**.

We have sited the **Place of Reinterment** in close proximity to the **Interpretive Center** in order to reinforce the resonance between the **African Burial Ground Memorial** and the **Interpretive Center**. With our design, we support an intimate, symbiotic relationship between history and life. In addition, this location would allow for the earliest possible reinterment date, independent of and least affected by the construction of the balance of the **Memorial**, should the Descendant Community so desire.

Our proposal reveals a number of distinct spaces having a choreographed visibility between them. It is intended that individuals, family and friends as well as larger gatherings would be accommodated, each finding a comfortable place within the ensemble. On days of great celebration, all of the gates may be opened to effectively expand the boundaries of the Memorial to the surrounding building walls. For evening use, the ground itself would be illuminated, and the Magnolias and Mosaic Book dramatically lit. The Place of Reinterment would shimmer with 408 candle points of fiber optic light, one for each ancestor remembered there. The woven copper fence would be transformed into a magic lantern, a luminous beacon in the night.



Beaten for no known reason, kidnapped from their homeland and forced onto a ship of unknown destination.

Once inside you are confused and unaware if you are ever going to survive this unbelievable ordeal. Watching your fellow brothers and sisters die right in front of your eyes. Finally, when it reaches its destination you were sold as though you were cattle. Religion, family and cultures were stripped from you both physically and mentally. This, the nightmare of many African-Americans and reality of the "African Slaves."

The intent of this memorial is to help educate the community about the history, culture and experiences of the African Slave. Entering the memorial from various points will induce experiences and emotions.

The northern portion of the site gracefully slopes upward to conceal the view of the southern portion. A wooden bridge allows individuals to cross the lower levels of the site. East/west-oriented paths bisect the site, which descends down into the lower portion and houses the waterfall, reinterment chambers, and area for seating. The lower portion of the site houses four rows of semi-circular seating, and a waterfall which cascades down the side of a circular wall which empties into a shallow pool. Behind the cascading waterfall will be various sculptural images, which protrude from the surface of the wall. Located directly underneath the shallow pool are two reinterment chambers, which can house approximately 700+ coffins. An additional chamber is located directly adjacent to the two chambers, which can house an additional 100+ coffins. Various sculptural images have been located throughout the site to instill African history and culture to

the viewer.

It is our hope that the layout of the site will help the public to understand the emotions and confusions felt by the slaves as they were taken from their homes and led to unknown destinations.

CONCEPTUAL PLAN

View "A" is entering the site from Duane Street; the visitors will be led onto a path, which culminates into a wooden arched bridge to an unknown destination. The northern portion of the site slopes upward to prevent the individual from viewing the other side. This symbolizes the path African slave took, by crossing a body of water to an unknown destination, but when you cross the water you learn your fate.

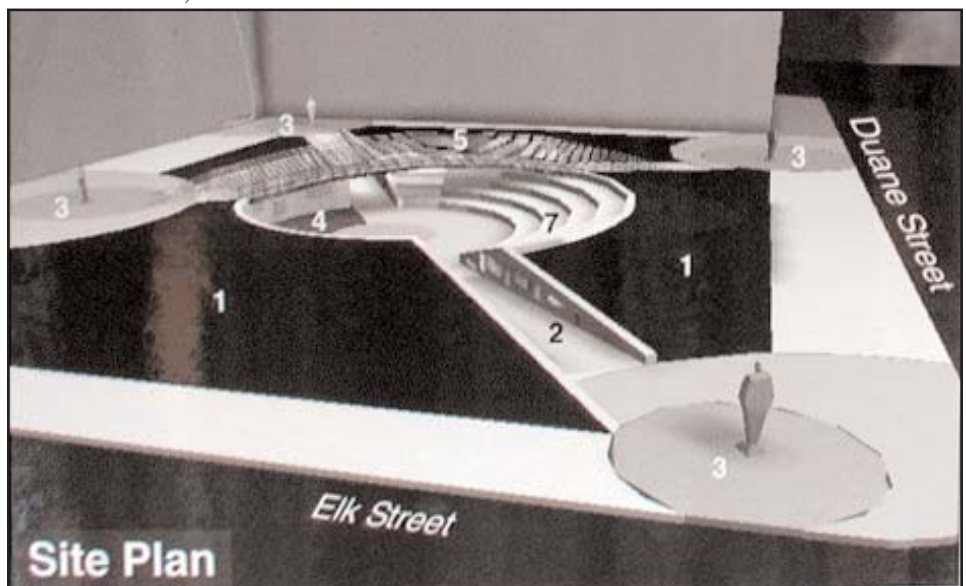
View "B" is looking at the central area of the memorial, which is divided by a body of water and a seating area radiating concentrically around the space. In the flowing body of water individuals can view history from afar but cannot touch. This is symbolic of the African-American people whose history is visible without crossing a physical barrier.

View "C" is the approach from Duane and Elk Street; the individual will be

led down into a path of an unknown destination. Along the path the individual will view various graphic representations of the history, culture and the families of the African Slaves.

View "D," the statues which are dispersed throughout the site, represent "the node of knowledge." This is symbolic of the way African tribes communicated. The Africans would gather in a central location where knowledge would be passed from individuals to the tribe. The people will gather in a common area to learn, feel, and travel to another time and place called "Africa."

Reinterment View "E" is two chambers that have been designed to allow for 700+ remains located along an east/west axis. There is also allocation for a third chamber, which could accommodate an additional 100+ remains. Once the "reinterment ceremony" is complete the chambers will be permanently sealed and the water will cover the chamber enclosures. The water will be turned on to enclose the sealed chambers. The water will produce the same image that the slave first saw leaving Africa, so the water should be seen first on their journey home.



THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND MEMORIAL

Eustace Pilgrim & Christopher Davis

FACES IN RELIEF DIVIDED

INTO SECTIONS

African-American
Children.1

Women.2

Men.3

Elderly.4

A section for those who died
in the middle passage.5



Faces are molded from members of the community

FACES IN RELIEF DIVIDED

INTO SECTIONS

African-American
Children.1

Women.2

Men.3

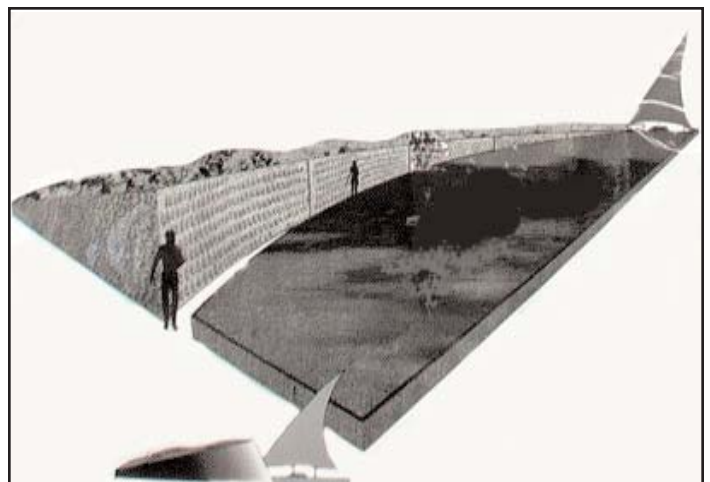
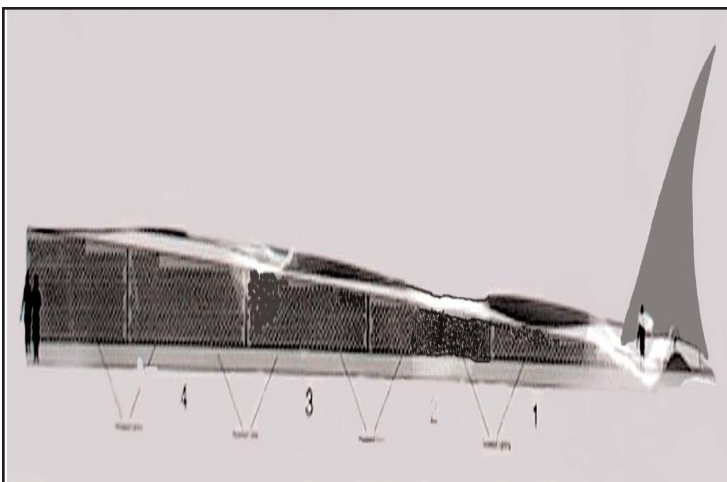
Elderly.4

A section for those who died
in the middle passage.5

Medium–dark gravel or a grassy knoll covers the entire site, evoking an ancient ruin or temple. A shallow pool sanctifies the ground and reflects the history, which surrounds it. African symbols in the bottom of the pool. The symbols would be polished metal. The Pool could also be polished and textured black reflective stone. The path leads viewers 7ft. below street level, on which they confront the

faces of their ancestors. A sail-like banner can be heard flapping in the distance. It reads “African Burial Ground.” At the end of the path, they encounter a boulder, which has been cut in half over a circular clearing. Pausing for reflection in this circular gathering place, visitors may sit on benches, which hug the circular walls, and look back on the wall faces. The faces will be lit from underneath at night.

They may also choose to leave gifts and blessings at the boulder. The adjacent building’s interpretative center is only 15 ft. away. From its window, a poem that reads backwards from the outside is clearly readable from within the building.



National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

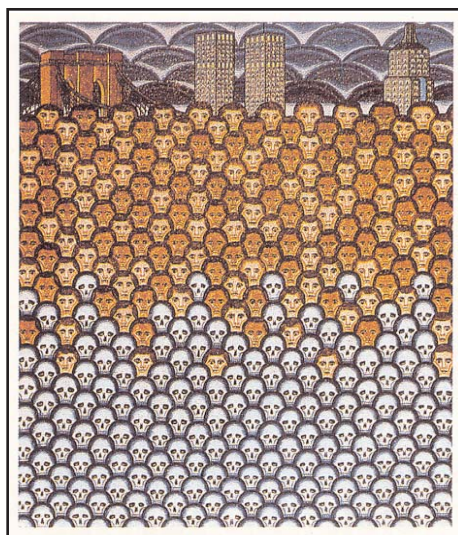
Andrea L. Lawrence



Several prestigious groups gathered together on February 7, 2003, at the landmark site of the New York African Burial Ground located at 290 Broadway, in a combined effort to commemorate the third annual observance of the National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, and to give honor to those buried at the African Burial Ground. The artwork entitled "The Mosaic" by renowned imagist Roger Brown, installed in the lobby of 290 Broadway (shown below), symbolizes such a union. These members from the community came out to express their concerns about AIDS, the epidemic that affects us all, especially those in the African-American and Latino communities. The event was sponsored by the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA), Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Harlem Directors Group, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NYC Department of Health, NYS Department of Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is a project of the Community Capacity Building Coalition (CCBC), a coalition of organizations committed to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS in the African-American community.

The Coalition is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the National Minority AIDS Initiative. Immediately following a leadership breakfast, the agenda commenced with a discussion of serious health issues that face our communities. The emphasis was directed toward the meaning behind the question "Why we are here?" The speakers addressed the need for developing a plan on how and why we should respond to the communities' needs, the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS and African-Americans, the history of tragedy: The African Burial Ground Project, and supporting the role of the black church in HIV advocacy.



The Mosaic

- Roger Brown

There were several important speakers: Michael L. Blakey Ph.D., the Honorable David N. Dinkins, Thomas E. Douglas, M.Ed., L.P.C., Sandra

Estepa M.S., C.S.W., Debra Fraser-Howze, Ayo Harrington, Marjorie J. Hill, Ph.D., Deborah Levine, Mustapha Khan, the Rev. Edwin C. Sanders II, P. Clay Stephens, P.A., M.PHIL, Carol Tyrell, Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D., and Beny J. Primm, M.D.

Debra Fraser-Howze opened by explaining the connection between BLCA and the African Burial Ground. "What better place to do a program of this nature than [at] the African Burial Ground? Today we are focusing on [the question]: What have you done with your freedom? We cannot allow HIV/AIDS to create another African Burial Ground in this Nation."

The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Chairman of the Board of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS and former NYC Mayor, reminded us of the communities' initial reaction towards AIDS victims when the epidemic began. Remembering a time when people were afraid to be in any physical contact with an individual who had AIDS. The idea then was that "God is punishing those people." He explained that there was a time when it was considered a death sentence if diagnosed with HIV. We have come a long way since those days. There are more medications available, and people can live longer lives. These people are no longer considered to be living a death sentence. Education has

enlightened us and allowed us to put down our masks.

Dr. Blakey addressed the audience with a discussion about the relationship between the observance of National Black Awareness Day and the significance of the African Burial Ground. He described many adversities that 18th-century Africans in New York had to face and are still confronting today.

Several issues surround these topics. In order to draw relationships between these two eras, one has to examine the adversities these individuals faced then, and compare them to circumstances we face today.

The most important issue that creates a cohesion between the African Burial Ground and BLCA is that of morbidity and mortality. "Those buried in the African Burial Ground saw this land important to them as they struggled against slavery. We are still struggling now against another epidemic." Dr. Blakey explained how he views these two separate events and how they parallel each other. Looking at the burial of a woman and a child (b.335/356) found at the site reminds us that when an epidemic attacks, no matter the era, everyone is affected.

Ayo Harrington, founder and chairperson for Friends of the African Burial Ground, also fused the relationship between BLCA and the African Burial Ground by explaining that during the 18th century, slavery was an epidemic that was killing the community, but today AIDS is the new epidemic that is just as devastating.

"[During the 20th century] ... New York is the epicenter of AIDS in this nation; during the 1700s, New York was the epicenter of slavery in America," stated Dr. Sherrill Wilson Ph.D., Director of the OPEI.

"38% of people that are living with AIDS in this nation [are] African-American and over 80% of persons in NYC with AIDS are African-American and Latino, and with NYC being the epicenter of AIDS in the nation, we clearly have a lot of work to do," stated C. Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President. Fields continued, "We need to assume responsibility to eradicate this epidemic." Fields emphasized that HIV is everyone's problem. The idea that it is not our disease or that it is not our business needs to be eradicated, she concluded.

African-Americans are the only ethnic group that exists today whose oppressors deliberately tore away pages of history, language, culture and traditions. Every culture has their own history all we have is a set of bones, explained U.S. Congressman Charles Rangel. "This burial ground represents another epidemic, another form of slavery," continued Sen. Rangel during the press conference. Despite the despondency of the topic, these leaders were able to respond to an outcry from the community and address these issues. As Reverend Edwin C. Sanders II so eloquently quoted, "You are the light of the world let your light so shine before all the people so that they may see your good works..."[Matthew 5:16] to encourage more activism on these two very important issues.



Awareness Day Press Conference: (front row, l to r) Dr. Michael L. Blakey, Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, C. Virginia Fields, Debra Fraser-Howze, Sen. Charles Rangel and Rev. Edwin C. Sanders

Photo credit: Dorian Harrington

HISTORY AT A GLANCE



Juneteenth and Manumission Day Celebration

Andrea L. Lawrence and Donna Harden-Cole

Juneteenth and Manumission Day are holidays celebrated by African-Americans nationwide. They are the oldest known cultural celebrations that recognize the end of slavery in the United States.

Slavery was officially abolished in New York State on July 4, 1827. However, African-Americans were warned not to celebrate their manumission on this day. Celebrations for this day did not begin until the following day, July 5th. July 5th is sometimes called New York's Juneteenth.

The Juneteenth holiday originated years later in Texas on June 19, 1866. The impetus for this great celebration occurred years earlier when in September of 1862, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation stating that on New Year's Day, 1863, all slaves must be freed.

News of the proclamation did not officially reach Texas for another two years--on June 19, 1865. On that day, Union Major General Gordon Granger read General Order No. 3 to the people of Galveston. General Order No. 3 stated: "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the U.S., all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and a right of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either or elsewhere."

Documented accounts regarding the reactions to this life-changing news ranged from trauma to exhilaration. The fact was that this segment of society was still bounded by slavery two years after the law had been revoked.

Large celebrations on June 19th began in 1866 and continued regularly into the early 20th century. This holiday was the equivalent to the Fourth of July in the African-American community. The Juneteenth celebration was a time for praying, gathering with remaining family, speakers with inspirational messages, reading the Emancipation Proclamation, food, games, rodeos and dances. As African-Americans migrated to neighboring states, the celebration of Emancipation Day, later called "Juneteenth," spread as well.

During World War II, Juneteenth celebrations declined but were revived again in the 1970s. For example, in Austin, the Juneteenth celebration returned in 1976 after a 25-year hiatus. Effective January 1, 1980, House Bill No. 1016 passed the 66th Legislature and declared "Emancipation Day in Texas" a legal state holiday. The celebration of Juneteenth continued across the state of Texas with parades, picnics and dancing.

This year, the St. Augustine's Slave Gallery Committee hosted an event to mark this often ignored but significant date in New York and African-American history. On Saturday July 5, 2003, there was a commemoration in song and spirit of the 176th anniversary of slavery's abolition. The event took place in Manhattan's Lower East Side St. Augustine's Episcopal Church.



Web Watch



Check out the African Burial Ground online @:

www.africanburialground.com



Learn more about the Juneteenth and Manumission Day celebrations @:

www.staugnyc.org/manumission_day.htm

www.juneteenth.com

www.chumpchange.com/juneteenth.htm

<http://elecville.com/juneteenth.htm>



The National Juneteenth Museum honors and celebrates the end of slavery and the beginning of African-American freedom:

<http://hosting.xigroup.com/juneteenth/>



One of the nation's greatest documentary treasures, the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln on September 22, 1862, has been part of the New York State Library's collection since 1865. Visit the Emancipation Proclamation Website:

www.nps.gov/ncro/anti/eman-cipation.html

African Burial Ground Student Writing Competition 2003

Kudos to the Winners and the Judges



List of Judges

Nwabueze Brooks
OPEI Volunteer, Educator

Debra Fraser-Howze
*CEO,
Black Leadership Commission on AIDS*

Dr. Martia Goodson
Prof. of History, Baruch College, N.Y.

Ayo Harrington
*Educator,
Friends of The African Burial Ground*

Dorian Harrington
OPEI Public Educator

Claude Massiah, M.B.A.
OPEI Public Educator

Christopher Moore
*Educator, Schomburg Center for
Black Culture & Research*

Dr. Lorenzo Pace
Artist, Educator

Eugene Alexander Peters, M.S.
Educator, SUNY Farmingdale, N.Y.

Andrea Rogers, M.A.
OPEI Public Educator

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson
Director, OPEI

College

Angela Blake

1st Place Essay

Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, N.Y.
“An African Vision for the 18th Century Negroes Burial Ground”

Kwasi Konadu

1st Place Poetry

Howard University, Washington, D.C.
“SAN-KOFA*(Akan-Twi: ‘return-go-bring’)”

Junior High School

Kobi Imani Liann Reid

1st Place Poetry

Homeschooler, Bronx, N.Y. (9th grader)
“New York, New York, ... Do You Want To Know The Drama?
Well The Truth Hurts”

Elementary School

Shamiah Lewis

1st Place Poetry

P.S. 5, Brooklyn, N.Y. (6th grader)
“A Thought Provoking Poem About
The African Burial Ground and Our Ancestors”

Desiree Giraldo

2nd Place Poetry

P.S. 75 Bx, Bronx, N.Y. (4th grader)
“Harriet Tubman”

Honorable Mentions

(All elementary students)

Tavera Clarke

Play

P.S. 75 Bx, Bronx, N.Y. (4th grader)
“Archaeology Today and Yesterday”

Tory Jefferson

Poetry

P.S. 5, Brooklyn, N.Y. (6th grader)
“Working In The Field”

First Place College Essay Winner
“An African’s Vision For The 18th Century Negroes Burying Ground”
 Angela Blake

Sound the death knell for fuddled bureaucracy and congenial political rhetoric! In reproving voices across the nation, the echoes of millions of African-Americans reverberate, “*Those bones are our bones!*” The ebullient wake-up call comes in the bloom of scathing ethical and moral disparities emanating from the General Services Administration while the portly, mercantile coffers of the organization spill over excesses in billions of dollars.

**Prepare yourself for an
imaginary exercise**

To the right periphery, members of the Congressional Black Caucus shake the stoicism out of laissez-faire social policies, quell the escalation of unreason through impassioned addresses before the House and reshape helter-skelter legislative agendas. They enact long term, systemic laws that water, fertilize and nurture the nascent concepts of “cultural value,” “preservation” and “hallowed ground.” Each representative recounts the physically, oppressive hardships endured by our colonial forbears who made immeasurable contributions to the growth and wealth of Nieu Amsterdam.

To the left periphery, along the political odyssey, enthusiastic supports of the largest anthropologic, Pre-Revolutionary study of slave remains campaign and maintain stellar voting

records-completely immersing themselves into widening their sphere of influence through increased governmental representation. Staunch scholar, teacher, student and parent harbingers take part in the in-depth analysis and interpretation of how the enslaved lived and when and why they died while continuing to stoke the fires of change fervently, charting a new course into the next millennium, far outside of the comfort zone. Persona non grata to quiet overtures!

**See it in your mind’s eye
...focus**

Fix your gaze onto the seismic, upward shifts in the number of astute archeologists, anthropologists, osteologists, computer scientists, sociologists and historians wielding the principals of kuumba, nia, ujamaa, kujuchagulia, umoja, ujima and imani. They cultivate the nguzo Saba in newspapers and books, on television, in neighborhood and community agencies, in industry and in schools. These “social engineers” build purposeful, goal directed coalitions with a widely divergent set of interest groups to provide cost-effective and cost contained fact-finding. Collectively, the outcome-oriented team, frenetically, resuscitates a disingenuous system that has no pulse-injecting bolus doses of commitment, goodwill and symmetry. A slow, unprecedented metamorphosis occurs

as the open system moves toward negentropy- increasing order, pattern, organization, complexity, diversity and differentiation.

Do not block the image!

Cast an approving glance at a new amalgam of informed individuals, communities, churches and grassroots organization moving beyond the mindset of powerlessness. Hear their affirmations, “*Status quo, must go!*” and “*Reinterment now!*” as the Republican and Democratic steamroller moves from north to south and east to west across the African Diaspora making sweeping, fundamental changes. With renewed determination, these African Burial Ground proponents want history (President George W. Bush’s) to be their story as well. They articulate their hopes and aspirations for unabashed educational initiatives that are the centerpieces of the supportive and restorative life and well being of African peoples, nationally and internationally. Alas, reformation recipient’s revel in seeing what was once a dust-laden “archival footnote” becomes a “national historical landmark.” See them bask in evolving spiritual patterns of growth, development and unencumbered need-satisfaction.

**Now, savor the sights...in 2003,
the ayes (eyes) have it!
Sankofa ☞**

First Place Elementary School Poetry Winner
“A Thought Provoking Poem About The African Burial Ground and our Ancestors”
 Shamiah Lewis

Starting on the
Manhattan bound J,
Transferring to the
Harlem bound A,
We are going to the
African Burial Ground.
Where our ancestors lay,
And some of us sit there
unknowing everyday.

We know they were
diligent,
We know they were poor,
We know they were striving
for that open door.
Through them we have
opportunity,
All they wanted was
unity.
They struggled and they
were tortured,

But they chose to stay
brave.
Jesse Jackson visits the
burial ground yearly,
And we know he prays,
loves, and cares dearly.
We all come to pay our
respects,
To the ancestors who led
the way
☞

Second Place Elementary School Poetry Winner
“Harriet Tubman”
 Desiree Giraldo

Homing Place: Maryland
African
Rooted in Freedom
Railroad Conductor
Individual: Common sense
Endlessly remarkable person
Tried to help others
Taken away from her parents
Underground Railroad
Believed in herself-brave
Most outstanding courage
American hero
Never forgot to have faith in
herself
☞

First Place Junior High School Poetry Winner
“New York, New York... Do You Want To Know Drama? Well The Truth Hurts”

Kobi Imani Liann Reid

Action!

Director: Make it lively, make it powerful,
feel the drama, be the drama, see the drama,
now, action!

Stolen from Africa and dragged to the
Americas. Our bodies blanket the deep blue
sea, and buried under concrete. Plagued
with diseases and seasoned. Bought and
paid for like we come out of a pet (store).

100 dollars! I say 100 dollars for the Negro
wench, do I hear 100? **\$250!**

Do I hear a \$300? And fellas no children...
Lynched and burned flogged in the streets,
women treated like fresh meat.

More Feeling! he says.

Do you want to know drama? Says the
voice, coming from the long halls in her
mind descending threw time.

What? she questioned.

I ask, do you want to know drama?

I was born a slave with seven sisters and
one brother. One sister was shipped to
Puerto Rico the next 3 to Jamaica.

And I ask do you want to know drama?

My mama died of a fever and open sores

Do you want to know more?

My brother who was like no other, got sick
one day and they killed him. Hey, if you
worked as hard as he did you'd be tired too.
My oldest sister fell in-love with a native
and massa hated natives, so when he found
out she was pregnant they tied her arms and
legs to horses and watched them run force,
and it ripped her apart!

And I ask do you want to know drama...

Hey! says the director.

Is this my history? Is this all I should

know?

Cause if so I'm doomed to repeat it.

Yes! I survived the S.S Jesus' Amistads and
Henrietta Marie's. My babysitter was only
7 when massa killed her with his idea of
sex. When she wanted to reject, he wrapped
his hands around her neck and said to her
she needed to give the bible some respect
slave obey thy massa.

Do you want to know drama?

My sister, my older sister, they beat her to
death before she even left Africa. I've been
beaten so many times I have a pattern of
scars. Every blood, sweat and tear of mine
adds to an American star on the flag for the
nation and America's emancipation. It's all
displayed on my back (says the voice).

What is that! My history! She shouts in the
sky about to cry.

Are you all right? says the director.

Someone calls to me, from out of the grave
telling me, young one you were not just a
slave, back home you had Shan go, O-ba-
tala, Ogun and Ye-ma-ya. Not worried if
you weren't buried around Massa's church,
Of course it hurt to be treated lesser than a
low rate citizen.

Hello! says the director.

She continues, and further more it seems
that everyone nowadays want to be patriot-
ic, or maybe blacks just want to be psychot-
ic.

Question, what does it mean to be an
American? My formally enslaved African?
Well, under the new rotten corpses and
cleaned up rubble, there is the rumble of our

ancestors. They mumble in their sleep, say-
ing I didn't want any buildings on top of
me, this is where I am supposed to rest in
peace.

“A memorial!!!” they say, a memorial! To
commemorate that day.

Hey! No one wanted to respect the land
before September 11th “No It would be
wrong!” says a patriot “to build another
building on top of the fallen towers.”

The same businessmen, the supposed patri-
ot's grandparents took showers in our blood
in less than an hour when two stone towers
fell to the ground. The world is in mourning.

Good Morning America!!!

Have I woken you up! she shouted. History
showed us weak, we prevailed at the end,
but then again, the wall that was bleeding
has now fallen into mid-town Manhattan.
And the poor egos of the Americans are
bruised, when its hairline couldn't stop
receding. The America as we know is
changing and the ancestors are laughing for
victory is all theirs.

Every blood, sweat and tear, every post
slavery fear, every minstrel shows. New
York is filled with snow, the snow of pay-
back. The chickens are coming home to
roost, and I guess, its time to give Massa his
own noose.

Now that slavery is supposedly abolished
we have all gone savage. In plain English
Massa is money and the government is God,
and the Native Americans don't care who
you are; they just want you off their land
and out of the country.

NEW YORK... NEW YORK....

First Place College Poetry Winner
“Sankofa *(Akan-Twi: ‘return-go-bring’)”
Kwasi Konadu

Re-member we when I was not
re-member roots when trunk, branches,
leaves fruit and flower were not
re-member common sense when
sight, smell taste, touch, and hearing were not
re-member that we have two ears and eyes
but they do not hear and see in twos
re-member that speech effects and
affects the speaker
re-member when folks drum to the spirit of
life and not life without spirit

re-member that fools speak, the wise listen
when the wise speak, everyone listens
re-member that the eyes can only see what
the mind trains it to believe
re-member that that is simply is!
re-member time as boundless, sacred reality
since not even time can time itself
re-member that the sky is black
and oceans have bottoms
re-member that it is paramount to
re-member what cannot be forgotten

re-member if we misuse our seeds
our potential fruit becomes rotten
yet, the blossom shall shine
in our children's forehead
and in their children's children
re-member what should never be forgotten
re-member each breath
re-member the power in finding
your place in reality
your mission and purpose in life

REMEMBER....

ANNUAL YOUTH SYMPOSIUM

Andrea L. Lawrence & Donna Harden-Cole

Over 50 youngsters and their guests attended this year's OPEI Annual Youth Symposium which was held on March 22, 2003, at 290 Broadway. We thank all who participated and extend kudos to our hard-working volunteers who were on hand to assist in the preparation and workshop segments of the event. The workshop volunteers were: Lester Alston, Allen J. Cole, Alonna Cole (youth volunteer), Laura Limuli, Marietta C. Morrell, June Terry, Patricia Willis, and Brenda Carpenter-Osayim. In addition, OPEI Volunteer Dr. Martia Goodson assigned several students from her Black Studies class at Baruch College/CUNY to attend the symposium to gather information for their "Scavenger Hunt" research project. We also thank Reggie Hodges for his artwork contributions during the event.

OPEI Public Educators Claude Massiah and Nonet Dapul conducted historical site tours of the African Burial Ground that included a discussion of the artwork installed at 290 Broadway to commemorate those buried in this sacred ground. The symposium resumed after a brief lunch with the showing of the documentary film "Feel It In My Bones," which is one of the first documentaries (1993) produced on the African Burial Ground and highlights the various components that evolved during the initial stages of rediscovery including a comparison to another black cemetery found in Texas. "This stuff is not put in books" stated one of Dr. Goodson's students. In response, OPEI Public Educator Dorian Harrington offered: "[No].... You are on a quest to uncover what is not told in the history books."

The final segment of the symposium was the African-inspired African Burial Ground T-Shirt Design Workshop. Adinkra symbols like Sankofa (learn from the past), Akoma (patience & tolerance) and Fihankra (security & safety) as well as other associated images were made available for the participants to use.

If you are interested in creating your own African Burial Ground Project t-shirt, please call us at (212) 337-2001 for more information.

You provide the T-shirt and OPEI will provide the images.



Youngster designing T-shirt

Photo credit: Dorian Harrington

OPEI 2003 SATURDAY CALENDER OF EVENTS

September 20, 2003 – 12:00 noon – 4:00 p.m.
African Burial Ground Film Festival
290 Broadway, 30th floor

October 25, 2003 – 12:00 noon – 4:00 p.m.
Volunteer Training
201 Varick Street, Room 1021
"National Make A Difference Day"

November 22, 2003 – 12:00 noon – 4:00 p.m.
Fall Educators' Symposium
290 Broadway, 30th floor

December 27, 2003 – 12:00 noon – 3:00 p.m.
Annual Kwanzaa Celebration
290 Broadway, 30th floor



leadership

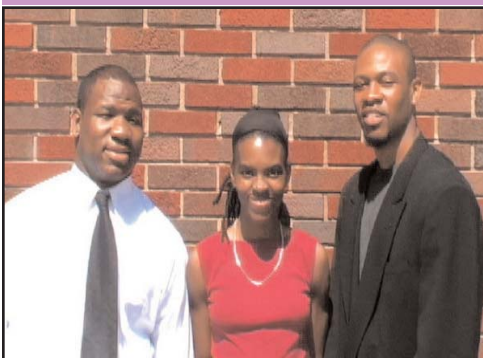


strength

**All events are free and will be held in
government buildings.**
Space is limited, so please reserve early.
Call (212) 337-2001
for information and reservations.



AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND UPDATE



OPEI Staff (l to r): Vincent Butler, Andrea L. Lawrence, Chellamar Jose Bernard

Photo credit: Dorian Harrington

► OPEI Welcomes New Staff:

Vincent Butler is a 23-year-old student at Mercy College. He joined the OPEI as a Public Educator in March. His major is marketing, and he is also a co-founder of the organization African Descendants of One Mind (ADOM). ADOM members represented the Black Student Union of Mercy College. This group participated in leadership conferences and cultural activities throughout the tri-state area.

Vincent served as a lobbyist for the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) in Albany, New York. He met with state and local politicians about financial issues facing the student members of HEOP. He worked for Bronx Senator David Rasado where he served as a Community Liaison, helping the members of the public obtain assistance from the Senator and other local governmental agencies. Vincent also gave speeches on behalf of the Senator at public functions.

Today he is fervently building his management company that he shares with two partners. He also enjoys organizing hip-hop and political events that empower young people.

Andrea L. Lawrence joined the OPEI staff in February 2003 as the Media Coordinator. She has an extensive background in computer systems. Andrea has a dual Bachelor's degree in Information Systems and Music Industry Technology from Mercy College. She was captain of Mercy College's cross-country team, resident assistant in the dormitories, tutor to the upward-bound students of Sleepy Hollow High School, as well as secretary of the African Descendants of One Mind (ADOM). ADOM members participate in seminars, conferences and cultural activities in the tri-state area.

She recently acquired her Master's degree in Computer Information Systems from Pace University. Her passions include songwriting, painting and performing. She now channels her artistic abilities toward the OPEI's projects. Andrea enjoys working at the OPEI.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, she has always been intrigued with the history of the transatlantic enslavement trade. She feels compelled to learn as much as she can about her ancestors and her heritage. Working at the OPEI has granted her this opportunity.

Chellamar Jose Bernard was born on February 1, 1980 to Marie Jose Bernard and Jacques Michell Bernard. Both parents emigrated from Haiti, making him the first generation of his family to be born in the United States. He has strong leadership qualities and

has a great sense of pride and appreciation for family and community.

He is now a Public Educator for the OPEI. He is a graduate of F.H.LaGuardia H.S. for dance and is preparing for graduation in 2004 from S.U.N.Y. Purchase Dance Conservatory. Chellamar has a passion for the arts and has been trained in numerous dance forms. He uses dance as a form of meditation, inspiration and education.

His love for children compels him to work with them as often as possible. He worked as Head Counselor/Teacher at Great Potential Summer Camp, Summer Intensive English Language Program and with autistic children at the Association for the Help of Retarded Children (AHRC NYC).

Chellamar's goal is to open a school that will focus on self esteem and self expression among young people.



In Memoriam



Richard Brown

July 3, 1925 - July 8, 2003

Richard Brown was an active member of the Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground and a driving force in organizing and implementing the Commemorative Stamp Committee for the African Burial Ground.

Our prayers and condolences are with his family

"RITES OF ANCESTRAL RETURN"

Continued from page 1

The vigil rituals and performances will take place outside at the Burial Ground site at Duane and Elk Streets. Individuals and groups (religious and secular) wishing to offer tribute to the ancestors may do so at this time. Ancestor Cards, personal greetings and messages which will also be interred with the ancestral remains may be placed in vessels on the site and in the lobby at this time. (Contact the OPEI office to receive Ancestor Cards in advance of the events. Cards will also be available at the site throughout the vigil period.)

5. OCTOBER 4, 2003

For approximately three hours, a formal Tribute and Reinterment Ceremony will take place on Saturday in the Foley Square Plaza at the convergence of Lafayette and Center Streets, at the site of the Lorenzo Pace commemorative monument, *Triumph of the Human Spirit*, so that the widest possible audience may be accommodated. These activities will be broadcast over Jumbotrons in the Foley Square Plaza.

Other planned activities include:

- A. Establishment of an international sponsor/host committee.
- B. A special children's ceremony organized by children to commemorate the infant and children ancestors.

Please go to the GSA's African Burial Ground website, www.africanburialground.com, for changes and updates on these activities. You may also contact the Schomburg's Center African Burial Ground Reinterment Project Hotline at: (212) 491-2040, or contact us at the OPEI office. The OPEI staff and dedicated volunteers look forward to working with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and all groups and individuals who wish to participate in this historic reburial.

As Always, May The Ancestors Guide Us....



African Burial Ground Coffin: Courtesy of the GSA

CALENDAR OF RITES OF ANCESTRAL RETURN ACTIVITIES



Tuesday, September 30

Departure ceremony held at Howard University
Washington D.C.

Wednesday & Thursday, October 1&2

Commemorative events in Baltimore, Md.,
Wilmington, Del., Philadelphia, Pa., and Newark, N.J.

Friday, October 3

Outdoor Arrival Ceremony
held at Wall St. and the East River

Saturday, October 4

Formal Tribute and Reinterment Ceremony
Foley Square Plaza at Lafayette and Center Streets N.Y.

Go to www.africanburialground.com for event times
or

Call the Schomburg Hotline at: (212) 491-2040



Update Newsletter Online and Future Mailings

Update will be published three times a year rather than quarterly. The OPEI's *Update* newsletter is now available online at the African Burial Ground web site, www.africanburialground.com. The OPEI will only be mailing hardcopies of *Update* to those without internet access. If you need to continue receiving *Update* by mail, please complete and return the coupon below to our office address.

OPEI African Burial Ground Project
201 Varick Street, Room 1021
New York, NY 10014

or
Fax to (212) 337-1447

**Yes, please keep me on the OPEI's
Update Newsletter mailing list for future issues**

Name: _____

Address: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Letters to the Editor

I am writing to express the appreciation of our group for the excellent lecture/tour given to us by Claude Massiah on April 3rd. Mr. Massiah was very well informed and gave a superb delivery as he led us through the lobby, the artwork, the Ring Shout and the Burial grounds. He was very generous with his time and expertise. The group continues to remark positively about the experience.

Rita Gotifred
Institute for Retirees in Pursuit of Education
Brooklyn, N.Y.

On behalf of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office and the Black Employment Program committee, I would like to thank you for your participation in this year's celebration of Black History Month.

Your video presentation was enlightening as well as informative. Employees expressed their gratitude and the overwhelming compliment to you was that you exhibited a vast amount of knowledge of the African presence in the North.

We appreciate the fact that you took time out of your busy schedule to come and share information with the employees of the Internal Revenue Service. It truly was a pleasure having you.

Maritza Collazo, Territory Manager
EEO & Diversity-
Manhattan/Brooklyn, N.Y.

On behalf of the Philadelphia Public Art Forum, we would like to thank you and Vincent Butler for the informative and insightful tour of the African Burial Ground, and for highlighting the artworks that are a part of this impressive project. We also appreciate your patience and consideration of our time constraints.

Laura S. Griffith, Assistant Director
Fairmount Park Art Association
Philadelphia, Pa.

On behalf of the College of Staten Island's Pluralism and Diversity Program, I am writing to thank you very much for your presentation on the African Burial Ground at our campus on April 28th.

Joan Friend, Coordinator
Pluralism and Diversity Program
Staten Island, N.Y.

We write to acknowledge receipt, with thanks, Vol.1, No. 1-12, Vol.2, No. 1-12 and Vol. 3, No 1-6 of the *Update* Newsletter of the New York African Burial Ground [Archaeological] Project you sent us.

The Institute of African Studies undertakes research in several aspects of African societies to preserve and increase knowledge of the African cultural historical heritage.

The Newsletter will be of interest to our researchers and we will be grateful if you could please put us on your free mailing list for subsequent copies of the newsletter and any other materials related to Africa. We really appreciate your donation.

Olive A. Adjah
University of Ghana
Accra, Ghana

Thank you for helping to make our Region 9 Staff Day on May 8th such a great success. The feedback we got from teachers was quite positive. Your presentation generated a great deal of enthusiasm, which is quite a difficult task late in the school year.

We look forward to continuing a long and productive association with you and want to thank you again for joining us at The Magnolia Tree Earth Center.

Diane Demsky
Instructional Facilitator
Brooklyn, N.Y.

On behalf of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition's One Thousand Churches Connected program, we would like to thank you for making our Ministers on Wall Street seminar that was held on May 13th-14th 2003 at the *New York Stock Exchange* a success. Your outstanding presentation truly blessed us and provided our ministers with a wealth of information. We would also like to express our heartfelt appreciation to you for your on-going support to the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition One Thousand Churches Connected.

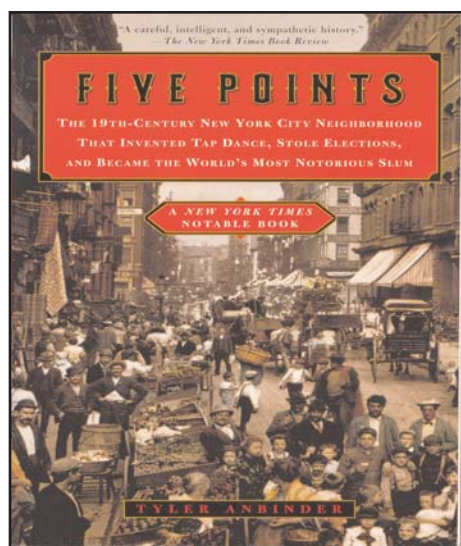
Rev. Jesse L. Jackson
Rainbow/PUSH
Chicago, Ill.

**OPEI welcomes letters
from its readers
but reserves the right to edit
for length and clarity**

SPRING/SUMMER 2003 READING LIST

Compiled by
Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson
and
Selma Hernandez

Anbinder, Tyler. Five Points: The 19th Century New York City Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum. NY: Plume, 2001



Berkeley, Bill. The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa. NY: Basic Books, 2001

Berlin, Ira. Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003

Boyd, Herb, Ed. The Harlem Reader: A Celebration of New York's Most Famous Neighborhood, From the Renaissance Years to the 21st Century. NY: Three Rivers Press 2003

Dow, George Francis. Slave Ships and Slaving. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002

Fine-Dare, Kathleen S. Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2002

Jackson II, Ronald L. and Elaine B. Richardson, Eds. Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations. New York: Routledge, 2003

Kelley, Robin D.G. Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002

Lamp, Frederick. Art of the Baga: A Drama of Cultural Reinvention. Germany: Prestel-Verlag, 1996

Mason, Clifford. The African-American Bookshelf: 50 Must-Reads From Before the Civil War Through Today. NY: Citadel Press, 2003

McHenry, Elizabeth. Forgotten Readers: Recovering The Lost History of African American Literary Societies. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002

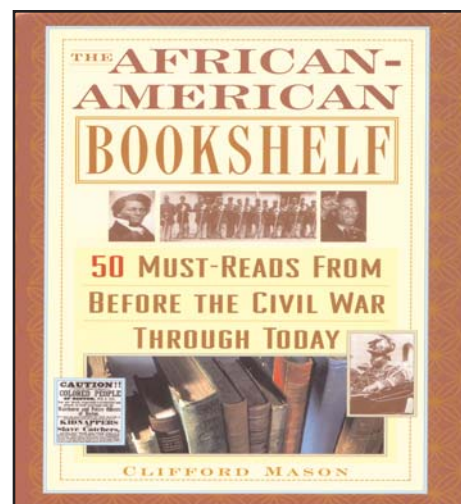
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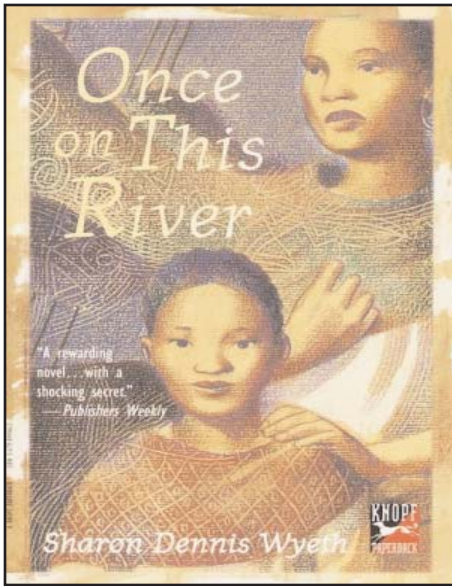
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Once On This River

-Sharon Dennis Wyeth

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York,

ISBN: 0-679-88350-9

Price: \$12.50

Reviewer: Andrea L. Lawrence

This compelling story reminds us of the time when slavery's prominence molded everyone's life, free as well as enslaved Africans alike. "How refreshing it is to see a different presentation of colonial New York from the usual patriots and politics. Wyeth's plot is original and the story is lovingly researched," as stated the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper.

Sharon Dennis Wyeth, renowned author, has written over 50 children's books. She expresses her experiences in life through her books. *Once on this River* is one of her many books that portrays slavery from a young person's perspective. This book took the author into her own voyage of her past. After extensive research and upon the

completion of this book, she was able to meet her great-great aunt. While collecting research for this book, Sharon Wyeth was able to produce an extensive genealogical background of slaves that existed during this period. She was able to base her characters on these details.

This story begins on a slow ship in the 1760s. Main character 11-year-old Monday De Groot and her mother Leslie are on a voyage to New York. The trip is very meaningful to Mrs. Leslie De Groot because her mission of coming to the New World is not for pleasure. This voyage is to complete an arduous task. Mrs. De Groot's brother has been wrongfully enslaved. Her mission is to prove her brother is a free man.

The book begins with this initial plot, but the story unfolds into another adventure. As Leslie De Groot travels to free her brother, her daughter Monday stumbles into a plot of her own, which encompasses the eventual discovery of the identity of her true birth mother. This compels the reader to empathize with the characters; one can envision him/herself living during that time.

Traveling from a free existence in Madagascar at age 11, Monday is exposed to the horrors of slavery on a ship. It is where her mom teaches the concept of her people being treated as cargo. As the story unfolds, Monday is taught how the enslaved were made to function in a colonial society. She learns about the existence and resistance of those that are and have been enslaved.

Monday experiences different kinds of traditions in the New World, some positive and many negative. She meets her cousin Viola who takes her on a journey into the city, where they meet an enslaved friend named Sampson.

Sampson's life in New York is a different experience from that of Viola and Monday. As Viola and Sampson learn about life in Madagascar, Monday learns an unspoken tale from these two.

This story also reveals the different levels of society in the African community during this time. Free Africans resided in a community with enslaved Africans. However, this proved to be a complex union and was just accepted by society that this was the way things were. This book possesses all a story needs to be simple and complete. There is love, there is war, and most of all the existence of slavery.

The book left this reader with a puzzling question. How does it feel to know you are free, but can still be enslaved at any time without any reason?



Other Books By this Author:

"Freedoms Wings" Corey's
Underground Railroad Diary, Book 1
ISBN: 0-439-14100-1

Underground Railroad Diary, Book 2
ISBN: 0-439-36908-8

"A Piece Of Heaven"
ISBN 0-679-88535-8

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